

Title: Demonstratives in the Languages of South America: Focus on Semantics

Category: either oral or poster

In this paper, I present a typological sketch of demonstrative pronouns in the indigenous languages of South America. The considered sample consists of 25 languages, representing ten language families and four isolates. The following characteristics of demonstratives are taken into account: (i) syntactic properties, by observing the distribution of demonstratives in the noun phrase and clause; (ii) morphological properties, by examining the morphological structure of a demonstrative in different syntactic contexts; and (iii) semantic properties, by looking at the features which can be encoded by a demonstrative. The latter constitutes the main focus of the paper, inspired by the observation that demonstratives in the native languages of South America can encode a particularly broad range of semantic features. This includes: (a) distance, (b) gender, (c) number, (d) visibility, (e) animacy, (f) expression of temporal possession and control over a referent by a non-speech-act participant, (g) movement, (h) specific information on the position of a referent in space and its posture, i.e. on the ground, above the ground; seated, standing, lying, hanging, (i) shape and structure of a referent, and (j) tense distinctions with the scope of a whole proposition. Some of these semantic features encoded by demonstratives are demonstrated in examples (1-9) below.

In a major cross-linguistic study on demonstratives by Diessel (1999), the South American continent is rather underrepresented with 8 languages out of a total sample of 85. In the last decade, numerous descriptions of the native South American languages have been produced, thus offering new material for typological comparison. In this view, the present study is of importance since the selected sample comprises languages (with the exception of Hixkaryana) which are not included in Diessel's (1999) sample. Thus, for instance, Diessel (1999) distinguishes deictic features from qualitative features within the semantics of demonstratives, i.e. information on the location of the referent in a speech situation relative to a deictic center and information characterizing the referent itself, respectively. However, data from Itonama (Crevels 2001), Mekens (Galucío 2001), and Movima (Haude 2006) call for postulating an additional 'intermediate' category which comprises encoding of information on the *absolute* position of a referent in space (therefore neither deictic nor qualitative), as well as reference to an entity in the temporal domain.

Therefore, the present research complements previous studies on demonstratives by offering a systematic analysis of emerging South American data. Focused on the semantics of demonstratives, in particular on the encoding of spatial information of various nature (i.e. on the ground; standing, seated, lying, hanging) and encoding of such a verby property as tense, this paper addresses the issue of a possible relation between such demonstrative forms and lexical verbs and explores a possible grammaticalization process.

Examples of semantic features encoded in demonstratives:

Distance, gender, number

(1) Miraña (Bóra; Seifart 2005:126)

í-htepi

DEM:PROX-GCM:F:DU

'these (two women, females)'

Visibility

(2) Kwaza (Unclassified; van der Voort 2004:227)

'já- ỹ- rj̃ *koreja'ro*

DIS-DEM:PROX-CLF:AREA-DEC pan

'the pan is over there' [invisible]

